



MAKE FIRE PREVENTION A PRIORITY SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

Fire Prevention Week may be over, but that doesn't mean that you should stop focusing on fire safety – especially considering the latest statistics showing that two out of three residential fire deaths occurred in homes with no working smoke alarm.

To increase your ability to survive a fire in your home, install smoke alarms on every level, including the basement. Smoke alarms are recommended both inside and outside of bedrooms. Battery-operated smoke alarms are easy and inexpensive to install when other options are not available.

Smoke alarms must be maintained. Check the test button on alarms monthly to determine whether they respond. Replace the batteries at least once a year and replace the whole smoke detector every 8 to 10 years. Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms with lithium batteries last for 10 years.

Newer alarms have wireless connections that cause all alarms in a house to sound when one goes off.

Hard-wired electric smoke alarms should be tested monthly and if they have backup batteries, the batteries should be replaced every year.

A smoke alarm with a dead or missing battery is as ineffective as having no smoke alarm at all. Disabling a smoke alarm or removing the battery can be a deadly mistake.

Use Fire Prevention Week as a reminder to check your smoke alarms and keep your family safe.

Minnesota State Building Code requires smoke detectors in all bedrooms and on all levels of a home.

For more information, contact Bloomington Fire Prevention at 952-563-8933 or Fire Marshal Gene Dugal at 952-563-8967.

WEBSITE KEYWORDS: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.



DID YOU KNOW? FIRST TO IGNITE

According to the National Fire Prevention Association, holiday decorations are the cause of more than 1,000 reported home fires each year.

When unplugging holiday decorations, be sure to use the gripping area on the plugs. Never pull the cord to unplug electrical devices.

ROUTINE INSPECTIONS BEHIND THE SCENES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

It's no surprise that hospitality is Bloomington's number one industry – there are countless reasons to visit and spend the night in Bloomington, including world-renowned shopping, award-winning restaurants and plenty of options for recreation, just to name a few. For all these reasons and more, Bloomington was recently voted "Best Staycation" – or best vacation spent close to home – by *City Pages*.

Bloomington's Environmental Health Division helps the city keep this title by making sure Bloomington's hotels and restaurants provide the safest environment possible for visitors.

For more than 40 years, Environmental Health has conducted regular inspections of food, pool and lodging facilities.

The City's highly accredited health inspectors have bachelor's or master's degrees in environmental health or related fields. In addition to certification from the State of Minnesota, several have additional specialized training in epidemiology, food safety education and swimming pool operation.

Environmental Health typically conducts as many as eight unannounced inspections per year at hotels. During these visits, inspectors focus on three important locations: the restaurant kitchen, hotel guest rooms and swimming pools.



Here's what inspectors look for:

Restaurant

Restaurant kitchens in Bloomington receive two routine and two follow-up inspections per year. Environmental Health inspectors have extensive training in food safety and the risk factors that contribute to outbreaks of foodborne illness. During a food inspection, inspectors note violations of the State Food Code. Critical items, if not in compliance, are more likely than other violations to contribute to food contamination and illness.

The top five critical risk factors for food contamination and illness identified by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention are:

- Improper holding temperatures.
- Inadequate cooking.
- Contaminated equipment.
- Food from unsafe sources.
- Poor personal hygiene.

Hotel guest rooms

When an inspector enters a hotel room, they scan for general sanitation and upkeep. They talk to hotel staff and provide basic training. The inspector tests the operation of fire alarms and hot water temperature, and makes sure linens are washed and changed between guests. A thorough hotel inspection



also includes scanning for bed bugs and other pests.

In addition, inspectors also check all storage and vending areas of the hotel.

Although not as visible as the City's police and fire departments, Environmental Health is working behind the scenes every day to make sure the City's restaurants, pools and hotels are clean and safe for customers.

Pool and spa

Pools receive two to three routine inspections per year. Inspectors check indoor and outdoor pools and spas for correct chemical concentrations. Maintaining the proper pH and chlorine levels prevents bacteria growth and disease.

Inspectors also check that handrails and ladders are secure, safety equipment is in place and rules and safety signs are clearly posted.

For more information, contact Environmental Health at 952-563-8970.

WEBSITE KEYWORDS: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

MEET A VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER Q & A WITH LAURA MCCARTHY

Volunteer Firefighter and Fire Inspector Laura McCarthy will be one of the many firefighters present at the annual Fire Station Open House on October 9, *see cover page*. We recently asked her to answer a few questions about her job.

Q How long have you been active in the Bloomington Fire Department?

A I've been with the Fire Department for 20 years and with the Bloomington Fire Prevention office as a Fire Inspector for 11 years.

Q How many hours a week are you on call?

A When I am not working for the City, I am on call for the Fire Department. Also, depending on my work schedule, there are times when I'm able to respond to calls during the work day.

Q Is it difficult to work full time and volunteer for the City?

A I have the best of both worlds when it comes to working full time and volunteering for Bloomington. I get to help people in many different capacities, both as an inspector and a firefighter. At times it can be difficult to do all the other things in life that need doing.

Q What would you say is the biggest challenge you've faced?

A The biggest challenge with both jobs is juggling time spent with family, going to school or engaging in hobbies.

Q Do you have a "scariest moment?"

A One incident that happened a few years ago was pretty scary. Another firefighter and I fell part way



through a burning floor. We held on to the floor joists to keep from falling completely through. With the help of other firefighters, we escaped with only a couple bruises.

Q Any interesting tidbits you could offer that people may not know about you?

A I like almost anything written by Stephen King, I enjoy vampire mysteries and I have a strong interest in anything related to WWII.

WEBSITE KEYWORDS: FIRE VOLUNTEERS.